

REMARKS

Status of the Application:

Claims 4, 6–10, 12–13 and 15–23 are pending in the application. Claims 4, 6–10, 12–13 and 15–23 have been rejected.

Telephone Interview on January 18, 2007

Applicants and the undersigned appreciate Examiner's attention and courtesy during the telephone interview held January 18, 2007 between the Examiner and the undersigned. Discussed were the rejections, proposed amendment, and the arguments. Agreement was reached that the Examiner will look at the response and after studying such response contact the undersigned in order to help bring this application to a condition of allowance.

Amendment to the Claims:

Applicants have amended the claims to correct some typographical errors. Applicants have also amended the claims, without prejudice, to bring this case to an early allowance, rather than to prolong prosecution.

Claim Rejections -35 USC § 101

In paragraph 4 of the office action, claims 4, 6–10, 12–13, 15–23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the language of the claim raises a question as to whether the claim is directed merely to an abstract idea that is not tied to a technological art, environment or machine which would result in a practice application producing a concrete, useful, and tangible result to form the basis of statutory subject matter under 35 U.S.C 101.

Applicants respectfully disagree. The invention is specifically tied to the technological arts, and has practical utility. It is for a computer implemented method that includes the steps of accepting information of bills of material, storing more than one bill of material on the same processing system, and providing access to at least some of the information according to control information that is received by a respective owner or an entity designated by the respective owner. As explained in the background section, during development and manufacturing of a product, elements, parts or components of the product are often kept in a structured item list called a bill of materials (hereinafter BOM while the plural form, bills of material, abbreviated as BOMs). For each such product, a BOM is used to keep track of information such as the number of parts used in manufacturing the product, the identification of parts, part vendors, and part costs. BOMs are used by manufacturers, e.g., engineering firms to maintain data used development and manufacturing of a product.

However, in order to rapidly bringing this application to allowance, the claims have been amended. Claim 4, for example, has been amended to be for a computer-implemented method that comprises:

- 1) accepting information of a plurality of BOMs, each BOM describable as a tree with each node an element, each element in each BOM having an owner of a set of more than one owner, and each BOM having an owner of the set of owners, such that BOMs associated with different owners are stored in the same processing system;
- 2) storing the plurality of BOMs in a processing system;
and
- 3) providing access to at least some of the information of one or more of the plurality of BOMs to one or more users according to control information, control information for providing access to a particular BOM being received from an entity that is the owner of the particular BOM and/or any entity that the owner of the BOM designates, such that the providing of further access to at least some of the information of a particular BOM is controlled by the entity that is the owner of the particular BOM and/or to any entity that the owner of the BOM designates.

A further result/limitation is that for each of at least two different owners, at least one of the BOMs of the respective owner includes confidential information of the owner, such that unrestricted access to the confidential information is limited to the owner of the BOM and any designees of the owner of the BOM. Furthermore, the different owners need not be related other than in that they each have information stored in the same processing system.

These are certainly practical tangible results and are very useful. They enable different owners to store BOMs in the same processing system, and to directly control access to that information. At the very least, one practical and tangible result of the method is that only the processing system in which the plurality of BOMs are stored needs to be maintained, yet access can be controlled by the respective different owners.

Similarly, each of independent claims 10 and 15 are each for a useful and practical computer implemented method that produces tangible practical results.

The rejections under 35 USC 101 are believed overcome.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §103

In paragraph 6 of the office action, claims 4, 6–10, 12–13, 15–23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rivette (US 6339767) in view of Keene (US 20040049294).

While Applicants do not concede to Examiner's arguments, and purely in the interest of rapidly bringing this application to condition of allowance, Applicants have amended all

the claims to include the limitation that *the different owners need not be related other than in that they each have information stored in the same processing system.*

Therefore, using independent claim 4 as an example, the present invention includes the following features:

- 1) A method that includes accepting and storing a plurality of BOMs of different owners in one processing system, and providing access to at least some of the information of one or more of the plurality of BOMs to one or more users;
- 2) A method that includes providing access to one or more users such that access to all the information of a particular BOM is controlled by an entity that is the owner of the particular BOM. As an example, the different respective owners of BOMs in the processing system control access to their own BOM(s). For example, the inventors envision one processing system in which different unrelated owners self-administer access to their own BOM data.
- 3) A method including the features of 1) and 2), and further, that the different owners need not be related other than in that they each have information stored in the same processing system.

None of Rivette, Keene, or Fu (cited in an earlier office action in combination with Rivette) anticipate or disclose having different ***and unrelated*** owners control access to their own BOM information.

Rivette is an example of a system in which the BOMs of different manufacturer's products may be represented, but the ownership of the BOM data itself—and control over access to that data) remains with only one party—Rivette's "Customer", and at least for this reason, Rivette does not anticipate the present invention. One feature of the present invention over Rivette is that in the present invention, control over access privileges is spread among multiple owners. Each owner can independently control access within that owner's own "domain" of BOM data.

Similar to Rivette, Keene teaches that access to a system containing BOM data is controlled by one entity (Keene's "OEM") who filters the OEM's own product data so that different partners (Keene's CEMs) can access a subset of the data. Keene however does not anticipate different entities being able to independently control, grant, and/or update *access* to their own data without the involvement of the OEM or host. Figures 5 and 6 of Keene illustrate clearly that Keene envisions access control being administered by one owner of the BOM data (the OEM), who uses the system to "filter" BOM data selectively for different CEMs. Furthermore, in the first sentence of Keene Paragraph [0006], Keene establishes that owner is the host. In the next sentences of Paragraph [0006], Keene establishes that the host is the only party which can control access to BOM data.

In contrast, the present invention describes the substantial tangible benefits that arise from configuring a computing system to provide different owners that can be independent, e.g., with no mutual business relationships, the ability to self-administer access to their own BOM data.

In Keene, one situation in which different entities can have different access privileges still has one party administers access. This is described in Keene's paragraph [0049]. This Keene-described way to allow different entities to maintain security between each other for data shared on one processing system is for these entities to have a special relationship, called an *escrow relationship* between each other. In an escrow relationship the related parties all agree to provide instructions to a single other party—the escrow agent—on how to control access to their individual data. Because Keene does not envision a system in which separate owners each self-administer access to their own data, the only way Keene can envision potentially competitive business partners sharing a processing system is through an escrow relationship in which potentially competitive parties provide instructions to the one agent who administers access.

With the present invention, in contrast, each owner separately can control access to its own data, and the need for a cumbersome escrow arrangement between potentially competitive owners such as in Keene is completely eliminated.

Independent claim 4 (as amended) is therefore not obvious over Rivette in view of Keene. Claim 4 (as amended) is believed allowable.

Similarly, independent claim 10 (as amended) and independent claim 15 each contains the limitations that make these claims not obvious over Rivette in view of Keene.

The independent claims 4, 10, and 15 are thus believed allowable. The dependent claims are similarly believed allowable. Allowance of all the claims is respectfully requested.

For these reasons, and in view of the above amendment, this application is now considered to be in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly solicited.

Conclusion

The Applicants believe all of Examiner's rejections have been overcome with respect to all remaining claims (as amended), and that the remaining claims are allowable. Action to that end is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or comments that would advance the prosecution and allowance of this application, an email message to the undersigned at dov@inventek.com, or a telephone call to the undersigned at +1-510-547-3378 is requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Date

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